

VZCZCXRO7745
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHBW #1810/01 3061550
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 021550Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9688
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1236
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 0620
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0255
RUEHPS/USOFFICE PRISTINA IMMEDIATE 3564
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BELGRADE 001810

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/01/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [SR](#)

SUBJECT: SPECIAL ENVOY WISNER'S VISIT TO BELGRADE

Classified By: Ambassador Michael C. Polt, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (c) Special Envoy Wisner's messages to government, church, and civil society leaders in Belgrade October 31 were exceptionally clear: the USG remains committed to a status decision by the end of 2006; contact group unity and support for Ahtisaari is and will remain solid; and Serbia's leaders will be expected to exercise responsible leadership at home and with Kosovar contacts in the aftermath of a status decision, even if that decision is unpalatable. Wisner extolled the virtues of the emerging Ahtisaari package as providing unprecedented rights and protections for minority communities, and urged church leaders to engage directly with Ahtisaari and local communities to ensure sustainable solutions.

¶2. (c) Positions of key actors were unchanged) Kostunica remained vehemently opposed to the "loss" of Kosovo and vowed "consequences" for any country that recognized a Kosovar declaration of independence; Tadic was resolute on his duty to protect Serbia's borders, but realistic on the need to maintain relations with the US post-status; church leaders, while still fearful and suspicious of Albanian long-term intentions, pledged their desire to tear down walls dividing communities) once sufficient walls were erected for their protection. End summary.

KEY MESSAGES

¶3. (c) Special Envoy Wisner's remarks to the key Kosovo players) Tadic and Kostunica) were starkly unambiguous: the USG remains committed to a status decision by the end of the year. It is clear to us, he said, that there is no other option) no return to the past, and no alternative to giving Kosovo independence. He told both Kostunica and Tadic that Washington was resolute in this view, and that resolving Kosovo represented a vital U.S. national interest, owing to the time, treasure, and troops we have already committed and would be committing to secure the settlement and transition. He acknowledged that we are at a point of fundamental disagreement with the Serbian leadership on principles, and hence on the conclusions drawn from those principles. He stressed, though, that how we manage that disagreement would

be the most important issue of the coming months.

14. (c) Wisner emphasized that Contact Group unity on this issue remained solid. In particular, he noted that we had started this together with the Russians, and we expected to end it together with them. Of course there have been disagreements and debate along the way, but consensus has always been, and will be, maintained. In the same light, he said the CG continued to fully support the work of UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari, who Wisner commended as a great statesman, a fair man, and a skilled negotiator.

15. (c) Wisner remarked that Ahtisaari's proposed package, while still in draft, was shaping up to be an "extraordinary document." He noted that the package would provide unprecedented rights and protections for the minority communities in Kosovo, particularly but not exclusively in the area of protections for cultural and religious heritage. This settlement, he said, would serve as a model for all of southeast Europe, and would probably force other countries in the region to give additional considerations to their minority communities. It would also invalidate forever the idea that population transfers and partitions are the only way to create stability in multi-ethnic regions.

16. (c) Wisner also told both Tadic and Kostunica in no uncertain terms that the international community would expect the Serbian government and President to exercise their formal and informal authorities to keep a lid on instability in the aftermath of a Kosovo status decision. He emphasized that he did not expect the Serbian leadership to embrace the decision, and even expected them to express some opposition. He stressed, though, that such dissent should be responsibly expressed, and that Serbia's leadership should bear the

BELGRADE 00001810 002 OF 003

burden of responsible management of the situation on the ground. This responsibility, he said, went beyond pledges not to encourage or orchestrate opposition. It meant active engagement to ensure passions did not enflame, and that a permissive environment for mischief was not allowed. Passivity in the face of instability, he said, would be the same as active sponsorship.

KOSTUNICA) "CONSEQUENCES"

17. (c) Kostunica's response was, in Wisner's retelling to CG Ambassadors later in the day, "bracing." The PM began by attacking Ahtisaari for neglecting the negotiations (noting he had attended only the "elephant round"), and said he was "astonished" that Ahtisaari had, without reference to the negotiations, apparently cooked up "something out of nothing," creating a settlement package when there had been virtually no agreement in the negotiation process. He also objected that there had been no real negotiation process, only a few meetings followed by conclusions drawn by Ahtisaari and the USG.

18. (c) Kostunica reiterated his long-held "core conclusions": That any settlement had to conform to: 1) the UN Charter and the inalienable right of national sovereignty and territorial integrity; 2) the need for sufficient political consensus in the UNSC; 3) UNSCR 1244, which confirmed that Kosovo is a part of Serbia; and 4) the recently-approved Serbian constitution, which recognized Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia. Kostunica then, and again several times in the course of the 30-minute meeting, reiterated comments he made recently in the press that there would be "consequences" to the relations between Serbia and any country that recognized a Kosovar declaration of independence, or who recognized an independent Kosovo constructed outside the boundaries of the four principles he laid out.

¶9. (c) Wisner thanked the PM for being clear. He said he had hoped to find common ground, but realized this would not happen. He emphasized that Ahtisaari's work was fully in line with the UN Charter and accepted practice, and noted that 1244 made Kosovo an exceptional case in the international framework. He noted that no previous attempt to reconcile Albanian-Serb relations in Kosovo in the framework of autonomy had ever worked; it was impossible to see these communities living together under a Serbian roof. He accepted the idea of consequences from a settlement, but said he preferred to look at the positive consequences) Serbia moving forward into Europe and NATO, the book closing on the Yugoslav dissolution, and security finally being brought to the Balkan peninsula.

TADIC) RELATIONS STILL IMPORTANT

¶10. (c) Tadic's response was far more pragmatic, though he also reiterated his stand that the President's responsibility is to do everything possible "within the rules" to protect the borders and the people of Serbia. Nevertheless, he said he realized that after Kosovo, it was critical that Serbia maintain relations with key players like the USG. He highlighted the difference in approach between himself and the PM in this regard. He stressed that no one in Serbia would push for Serbs to leave Kosovo, as that would be counter to Serbian security interests and would endanger democratic institutions (Note: Primarily by swelling potential ranks of Radical Party voters and creating sympathy for the Radical cause. End Note.) Tadic pledged he would not encourage trouble in Kosovo, and said he had a good cooperative relationship with Admiral Ulrich and JFC Naples to coordinate the security situation on the ground. He noted, though, that the best way to ensure Serbia's responsible behavior regarding Kosovo would be to encourage and ensure a democratic government in Serbia following upcoming parliamentary elections. For this, Tadic said he would need the strong support of the USG.

MEETING WITH CHURCH LEADERS

BELGRADE 00001810 003 OF 003

¶11. (c) Wisner also met with Metropolitan Amfilohije and Bishops Irinej (of Backa) and Teodosije to discuss issues specific to the church. He outlined the remarkable protections for the church and church property in Kosovo he anticipated would be in the Ahtisaari package, and encouraged church leaders to go to Vienna and meet directly with Ahtisaari, both to understand his proposals, and to give him direct input regarding their concerns. Wisner cautioned, as well, that no matter how many protective walls were built, or good laws written, or international soldiers stationed to protect them, the long-term peace and security of the church and the Serbian community in Kosovo depended on the church taking the lead to build bridges between the communities and encourage tolerance and respect. He also encouraged church leaders to urge participation by Serbs in Kosovo's government, so they might have a secular champion in the decision-making halls to defend their rights.

¶12. (c) The clergy broadly endorsed Wisner's approach. Amfilohije agreed that, while building walls was good) even necessary) in the short run, it had always been the policy and the mission of the church to tear down the walls that divide communities. He and the bishops pledged their desire to see a long-term sustainable church and Serb community in Kosovo whatever the political outcome. Nevertheless, all three clergy expressed deep-seated suspicion as to the ultimate intent of Albanian leaders. They expressed their belief, borne of observation, that Albanians in their communities were willing to "bide their time" until the

international community departed, but that in the interim, many Albanians continued to plan for other uses for church property) from hydroelectric plants to restaurants and hotels. Teodosije remarked that on one journey outside his mission, his party came upon Albanian surveyors immediately outside church grounds who were measuring for planned construction projects. Such encounters, they said, did not engender trust. Teodosije also passed on a current dispute between his church and local Albanians over encroachment onto church lands (documentation faxed to USOP and EUR/SCE). Wisner promised to have the situation looked into.

¶13. (u) This cable has been cleared with SE Wisner's office, and is cleared in its entirety for release to Special Envoy Ahtisaari.
POLT